

Isidor Rayner Maryland's New Senator

THE career of Mr. Isidor Rayner—scholar, statesman, orator and lawyer, delegate, state senator, congressman, attorney general and United States senator—has been a notably brilliant one from boyhood.

He was born in Baltimore on April 11, 1850. His father was a learned and opulent gentleman, distinguished for business sagacity and success, as well as for his generous philanthropy and public spirit. His mother was a woman of excellent education, generally beloved for the sterling virtues of her character and for the kindness and benevolence of her life.

As a boy Isidor Rayner was thoughtful and studious, with a sympathetic disposition and a particularly keen wit. His early education was probably received at the hands of his father. Until he was 15 years of age he attended a private school. He was devoted to literature and declamation and would frequently recite the Latin in the woods near his father's country place, at Mount Washington. On one occasion a friend of his father, visiting the house, observed the boy gesturing and vociferating in the most vigorous way in the woods, and inquired, to the infinite amusement of the father, if his son was demented.

At 15 years of age Isidor Rayner entered the University of Virginia. There he promptly distinguished himself in his studies and in the sports of the faculty and students. His interest in letters and oratory increased, and he became a leading figure in the Jefferson society, the membership of which embraced a large number of young men who have since become eminent in the fields of jurisprudence, statesmanship and journalism, including notably Senator John W. Daniel of Virginia; John S. Wise, now of New York; the late Henry W. Grady, of Georgia; and former United States Senator Charles J. Falkner of West Virginia. From among men of this sort the brilliant young Baltimorean was chosen, in 1868, as an orator of the Jefferson society. The subject of his oration upon this occasion showed the bent of his sympathies. It was "Civil and Religious Liberty."

Admitted to the Bar.

After pursuing both the academic and the legal curricula at this celebrated seat of learning the embryonic advocate returned to his native city and sought admission to the bar. He continued his legal studies for a brief period in the law offices of Brown & Brune, and in due course presented himself for examination as to his qualifications to practice. He was examined for admission in the accustomed way by ex-Governor William Pinkney Whyte and two other prominent members of the bar. The distinguished ex-governor himself conducted the examination, and had not proceeded very far with his inquisitorial mind, for the promptness, amplitude and lucidity of the young man's answer to every question, he turned to his colleagues upon the examining board and said:

"There's no occasion to ask him anything more. He has mastered his books so recently and well that he knows more about these matters than we do."

Mr. Rayner is a thorough and finished student of his profession. He is deeply learned in the common law and in the decisions of the courts of Maryland and of the United States. He is a fine specialist in equity, and has also a remarkable memory for cases and from the thirtieth to the last volume of the Maryland Reports there is not a case which Mr. Rayner has not read. His strong sense, sound judgment and comprehensive views, together with his elevated and refined sense of right, invest his opinions on legal questions with great weight with the bench and the bar.

Shines at Trial Table.

Of course, at the trial table he shines most brilliantly. His preparation is complete, his masterly facts and figures in their details; he seizes the controlling points, holds them with a relentless grip and presses them upon court or jury with a force of argument, illustration and eloquence that is irresistible. Combined with all this, he has rare tact in conforming to the intellect of the court and the feelings of the jury. In this way he has won many cases which many men would have lost, and it is no exaggeration to say that he has "sat an hour and a half with" any one else could have won. His speeches in court are clear, direct, forcible and marked with eloquence not easy to be equaled.

In respect for the bench, candor, fairness and integrity he would be an exemplar to any bar. He is notably kind to young members of his profession, by whom he is frequently consulted and spared neither pains nor time to aid them.

Mr. Rayner's method of preparing his more important legal arguments may best be illustrated by Everett's description of Mr. Webster's state of mind as he "sat an hour and a half with" him "the evening before" the reply to Hayne. "The battle had been fought and won within, upon the broad field of his own capacious mind; for it was Mr. Webster's habit first to state to himself his opponent's argument in its utmost strength, and having overthrown it in that form he feared the efforts of no other antagonist."

His Defense of Schley.

It was Mr. Rayner's defense of Admiral Schley that caused a national wave of commendation. The inquiry is well remembered.

The sudden death of Judge Jere M. Wilson, senior counsel for Admiral Schley, threw upon the Baltimore advocate the onerous burden of the case. He was not an admiralty lawyer. He had worked for months on the case, taking up trigonometry in studying the leadline, delving into sea law and lore, learning about gulf stream currents, cooling at sea problems, tactical diameters of cruisers and whatnot of tedious detail.

When the crucial moment came he was saturated with his subject. Laying down his copy of the specifications he talked with alluring facility in pleasant tones until, becoming warmed up with earnestness, he sneered at entangled witnesses, scoffed at trick memories, lashed as with "scorpion whips" the alleged traducers of the man whose fame rang around the earth.

The audience tried to interrupt with applause as he made point after point, but he rushed along unheeding until he fairly swept the assemblage "off his feet" with his dramatic climax.

The climax came quickly. And such a climax! For a full half minute the big room was as hushed as a forest on a sultry day. Then, like a hurricane, came the applause. The tension had been remarkable. The stillness was aweing. With the reaction came the thrilling outburst of cheers.

A Triumphant Moment.

It was a triumph worthy of the forum. During the afternoon women had fainted from excitement. Applause had grown in volume and frequency as the speaker swept on from satire to tenderness; from merciless criticism to passionate appeal.

More convincing still was the surging of the three grave admirals, in common sympathy of feeling, from their places on the bench to the counsel table. Moved by the same impulse, they hurried to congratulate the speaker and his client, their fellow-sailor-fighter.

From every point of the union came congratulations to the orator. His biography was spread over the country by the newspapers. His picture was brought by women and men. His speech in pamphlet form was demanded of the public printers by admirers miles away from the scene of its delivery, where interest ordinarily would seem slight. But with becoming modesty, he said: "The occasion made the speech, not the speech the occasion."

A superb diamond and pearl brooch and a watch of gold were the only fees Isidor Rayner received for defending Admiral Schley before the committee of Inquiry. Rayner refused to accept a dollar in fees or even his personal expenses. The admiral sent the splendid pin to Mrs. Rayner, and the watch to the eloquent lawyer as tokens of his esteem.

The inscription on the case is as follows:

"To Hon. Isidor Rayner, as a loving tribute from his friend, W. S. Schley, November, 1901."

Matter of Common Knowledge.

Mr. Rayner's public life is a matter of common knowledge all over Maryland and, indeed, throughout the republic. His influence has always been exerted to support sound and wholesome principles, to check unlawful usurpations and encroachments of power, to assist the persecuted and oppressed and to restrain all dangerous tendencies. His political life alone, without other accessories, has won for him a national distinction.

Mr. Rayner's first appearance in politics was in the legislature of 1878, when he was virtually chairman of the judiciary committee, and was looked upon as the leader of debates upon the floor. This legislature was considered one of the most memorable that ever met in Maryland. It numbered among its members such men as Montgomery Blair, Philip Frank Thomas and others of distinction. After the session was over Mr. Rayner devoted himself entirely to his practice until 1888, when he received the nomination for state senator, and was elected. As a member of the senate his principal work was again on the judiciary committee in framing legislation and in the leading part he took in the debates on the floor.

In the fall of 1886 he received the nomination for congress, and was elected and served three terms, receiving a unanimous nomination each time, and declining the nomination for a fourth term. During the first term Mr. Rayner took a leading part in the debates, and in the second and third terms he gradually advanced until his position became a prominent one before the people of the country. He served upon the committees of foreign affairs, coinage, weights and measures and commerce, and took a leading part in the discussion of important measures on the floor. He was chairman of the committee on organization and conducted the famous contest for the repeal of the Sherman silver bill, opening the debate upon the repeal with a speech that attracted great attention.

Leader in the House.

In congress Mr. Rayner was looked upon as one of the leaders in the house, and he and Bourke Cockran were regarded as the foremost Democratic orators in the Fifty-second and Fifty-third congresses.

Mr. Rayner has taken part in not less than twenty-five campaigns, and in every seven of them did he figure as a candidate; and in his long career his logic, eloquence and cogent reasoning as a public speaker have greatly helped in electing governors, mayors, councilmen and United States senators through the legislatures controlled by Democratic majorities. In addition Mr. Rayner, in the campaigns in which he has participated, has been a strong factor in the election of thousands of county officials throughout the state.

From 1873 down to the present time—a period extending over twenty-eight years—Mr. Rayner, as his record shows, has rendered distinguished services to the Democratic party of Maryland. In state campaigns and in the political contest in Baltimore he has exercised his influence and devoted his energies and abilities to the advancement of the party's interests—to winning victories for it, without regard to his individual political fortunes. His voice has been heard, not only at home, but in every part of the state, in advocacy of Democratic principles and in championing the success of the Democratic party.

Mr. Rayner has for years been recognized as one of the ablest speakers upon the hustings for the Democratic party in the country, notably so in the campaigns in which Mr. Cleveland was a candidate for president. Mr. Rayner conducting the canvass with Vice President Stevenson in the eastern states. In Maryland he has been for some time a leading public speaker of the Democratic party—Baltimore Sun.

His Wages Were Raised.

Periodically James Gordon Bennett comes from Europe to inspect his newspaper plant in Baltimore, and carefully precedes his coming, but recently one unhappy printer scandalized his fellows by appearing in a semi-tipsy condition on the morning of his day. The man was barely able to keep awake, but was still sufficiently alert to evade the foreman until Mr. Bennett discovered him in person. During an unguarded moment the tipsy printer had accidentally encountered an ink roller, and his face was covered with a thick black smudge of ink. He did not move during inspection, but leaned sadly against the wall and returned Mr. Bennett's gaze pathetically. Mr. Bennett said nothing until the moment of leaving, and then called the foreman after him. The shop waited anxiously for the result. Presently the foreman returned furious. Shaking his fist in the ink-smudged countenance of his subordinate he ejaculated:

"Say, you wash up an' go home, and come back tomorrow when you are sober."

"To get my wages?" stammered the offender. "Am I bounced?"

"Naw," snorted the foreman in disgust. "The boss saw all the ink smeared on you and called me out to say that you look like the only man in the shop that works, and he raised your wages \$5 a week, 4— you!"

He Obeyed Instructions.

(Harpur's Weekly.)

A prominent racing man tells the following story on himself.

His jockey fell off the eve of an important race and left him without a rider for the horse which he had entered for the event. He was under any circumstances unable to decide whether to substitute the horse he decided that his stable boy, who was thoroughly familiar with Spittfire's ways, would fill the bill very acceptably.

"Now, you must be careful," he warned him. "To use Arizona as a pacer; he is a wonder, and will lead the track; follow him closely until just before the finish—don't pass him under any circumstances until you get within a few lengths of the line; then let Spittfire out for all you're worth."

The capitalist paused in his recital, and turned his clear meditatively in his fingers.

"Well, did he obey your instructions?" asked one of his listeners.

"Yes," answered the owner, "to the letter. He kept just behind Arizona until they were almost at the finish line, and then he started ahead in great shape; but unfortunately, there were four horses ahead of Arizona."

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